

The Norfolk



Natterjack

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Articles with the camera symbol have associated photographs in the Nats' Gallery (centre pages)

Toad-in-the-hole....

As this is the last edition for 2008 I would like to wish all members seasons greetings and a peaceful new year. As the nights draw in you can relive some of the summer moments with the wildflowers revealed reports and if wet and cold curl up in front of the fire with the seasonal fun crossword. Thanks again to all contributors and photographers and please continue to send your notes and observations for 2009.

FF

Ivy

Mike Hall

In the last two or three years Ivy seems to have gone from a nice respectable scrambling hedgerow shrub that gave some ground cover and climbed some way into other trees and shrubs where it flowered, to a rampant coloniser of anything and everything - at least in my garden it has and the situation is much the same in the local hedgerows. It has rampaged far and wide over the ground, completely obliterating any grasses and even strangling the Nettles that grow in all the less well tended parts of the garden and are harvested regularly as a compost activator and liquid fertiliser provider. So much so that in a couple of areas Nettles have disappeared and even the Lesser Celandines are struggling to break through the surface matt and survive.

Not only does it have to be kept at bay on the ground by regular mowing - with a rotary mower - but perfectly healthy trees (apparently so anyway) like Ash and Field Maple are looking more like dead or dying elms they are clothed in so much Ivy. The irony is that whilst there is this extensive vegetative growth the actual flowering seems to be coming later in the year and with the second brood Holly Blue appearing a little earlier there could be a mis-match and further cause to bemoan the fate of yet another species of butterfly.

I have surmised that this accelerated growth is due, at least in part, to milder, wetter winters when the Ivy just does not stop growing but wonder whether any of the Society botanists have a more positive reason. Indeed is this something that is restricted to this part of South Norfolk or has it been observed generally across the county?



Adonis annua.

John Crouch



During my childhood in the 1950's *Adonis annua* (Pheasant's eye) was regularly located growing in cereal crops, nowadays it appears to be quite rare.

However, earlier this year several specimens of *A. annua* were found growing in an area of Norfolk, the area concerned used to be drilled annually with 'Game Cover, crops for pheasant shooting, when the shooting ceased due to a change of ownership the area was drilled with a 'Conservation Mix'.

Therefore, one feels that there is some doubt as to the origin of these plants as the seeds were almost certainly introduced with the Game Cover or Conservation mixes.

A very dusky Garden Tiger

Tim Peet



In spite of the miserable summer, the Garden Tiger moth flourishes at Hickling and during the only hot week of the year I was trapping up to 300 in one night.

A very dusky specimen arrived, ab. *fumosa*, as shown on one of the two pictures. The second image illustrates and compares with the typical example.

On Guernsey, the Jersey Tiger is far more frequent, followed by the Cream-spot Tiger.

A strange gall

Francis Farrow



On September 20th an oak tree on Sheringham Common covered with the normal galls of the season, smooth spangle, common spangle, silk button, cherry, pea and knopper also revealed a strange gall. The gall was a mass of short somewhat flattened projections. The young galls were wine red in colour becoming green when more mature. The causer is a gall-wasp, *Andricus grossulariae*, and according to Rex Hancy, who identified the gall for me, it is a recent colonist of Norfolk.



So Where Have They All Gone?

David Paull

- reports on a coleopteran mystery

It was hardly a strictly controlled scientific study but it has produced an interesting and mystifying outcome. At the end of a talk to a gardening club at Great Ellingham, near Attleborough, in August I showed a slide I had made of the painting by Ken Durrant of five variants, plus a larva, of Harlequin ladybirds *Harmonia axyridis* (Transactions Vol. 38 Pt. 1 July 2005).

I said I had not seen a single Harlequin this year. Had the Ellingham gardeners seen any? One volunteered that he had seen two. The others, none.

I reported this in the "Nature sightings" slot at the Society's September meeting. The response was the same. Just the odd one or two - but with the added comment: "We've seen hardly any ladybirds of any species this year."

Janet Negal reported at a Society Council meeting last autumn that when she took her Hapton School Wildlife Explorers group to Hapton churchyard they found Harlequin beetles and larvae by the hundred. Dorothy Cheyne said that she had counted hundreds on white-painted woodwork at her home.

Janet returned to Hapton churchyard this autumn. Not a trace of the Harlequins!

So, after all the panic about this aggressive invader that was threatening our native species, where have they gone? But, then, where have the native species gone? Have they all just succumbed to the summer's dreadful weather, which has had a catastrophic effect on many insect species, notably the Lepidoptera? If so, why were there so many Harlequins about last autumn after a summer that was at least as bad?

Over to the Society's expert entomologists. Was it just the weather or are there other reasons? Are the ladybirds likely to recover next year or has the devastation been so severe that it might several seasons before we see significant numbers in our gardens again?

(I recently checked through Great Yarmouth Northgate cemetery where many adults, larvae and pupa could be seen in recent years, this time (26/09/2008) no trace of Harlequins. On Beeston Common two individuals have turned up (25/08/2008 and 13/09/2008). Maybe these were new immigrants? – FF)



What's for Dinner?

Mary Ghullam



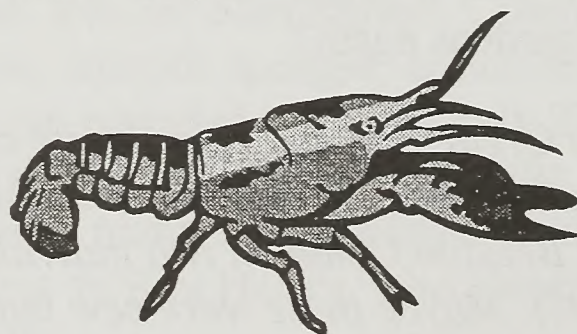
You never know what you will see when strolling along the river Bure: - the flash of iridescent blue and chestnut of a Kingfisher flashing past; the leisurely outing of a family of Mute Swans; the smooth round leaves of Alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage masquerading as Ground Ivy; the lazy movement of the fin of a Brown Trout or the remains of someone else's dinner, abandoned on the path!*

What was it and who had left it? Certainly it was becoming rich pickings for the large orange slugs. After close examination and discussion the best we came up with was that it was probably a Signal Crayfish, (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), given its size and large red claws and that the possible owner was an Otter or Mink. A path from it led through the grass back into the river. After taking a grid reference and photographing it, we carried on our way, leaving the dinner behind.

Based on the photographs, Martin Pugh, of Essex Ecology Services, confirmed our identification. It *was* a Signal Crayfish, because of the white signal spots on its claws, the claws' shape, size and red coloured undersides as well as the pointed shoulders on the rostrum. All of these made it an adult and probably a male, owing to its proportionally large claws, which were still in tact. According to Martin, Otters sometimes bite off the tips of the claws in order to extract the juicy meat.

Did the owner return to finish his meal, we wondered? What of our native White-clawed Crayfish, (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), recorded in the past from the Bure? Was it still lurking in the depths of the river or had its larger American cousin taken over?

* All seen recently on the upper stretches of the Bure.



Strumpshaw Fen Surprise

Brian Macfarland



I made one of my many sorties to Strumpshaw fen recently, mainly to see the osprey, which had been around for several weeks. This particular day I spent about six hours in the fen hide, as this was the most likely place to glimpse the osprey. It came over three or four times in that period. I was lucky on one occasion when it flew over quite close. I saw it once drop on a fish but failed to catch it. Unfortunately every time it came into view it was mobbed by crows, which drove it off for another couple of hours.

While this intermittent excitement was going on, I was trying to take a photograph of the little fish that kept jumping clear of the water to avoid what was probably a predatory pike chasing them. Of course the main problem with that is you don't know where they are going to come out of the water! If you were pointing in the right direction the chances of getting the shot off before they disappeared was impossible, as they was so quick.

So the trick is to photograph a kingfisher flying off with it's catch, and lo and behold not only do you get the little fish jumping out of the water, but you get predatory fish joining in the fun. WOW! How's that for a catch!

Seasonal Fun Crossword Answers

Across		Down	
2.	DIPTERA	1.	FROGHOPPER
3.	AMBER	4.	BULL
5.	SNAILS	5.	SHARK
7.	ARROWHEAD	6.	MAST
12.	MOTH	8.	WEAVER
14.	CREPUSCULAR	9.	MERE
18.	HONEYDEW	10.	BUCK
20.	RUDERAL	11.	SCALES
21.	SKULK	13.	TARN
22.	EAGLES	15.	LUCERNE
24.	HERONS	16.	SPINDLE
27.	MURMURATION	17.	CHALK
28.	PEAKDISTRICT	19.	GLANVILLE
		23.	SETT
		24.	HALOPHYTE
		25.	SMOLT
		26.	BOX



A strange tale

Tony Howes



I recount this story here of some thing that happened about 18 months ago, at the time I was left mystified and baffled.

It started when Wendy and I were woken in the early hours by some thing moving about in the bedroom, slight shuffling and scratching sounds. I got up and put the light on, and very briefly caught sight of a movement as some thing moved out of the bedroom into the hall, in my dazed state (what's new there you might ask?) I had no inkling of what I had seen.

Next morning, thinking it was most likely a mouse that had disturbed our slumbers, I baited a trap with a hazel nut and placed it in a corner among a stack of boxes. I didn't look at it again until the evening and was amazed to find, not a mouse, but a full grown frog caught square across the head, looking very dead.

As Wendy was out I left it as it was so she could see this unusual and unexpected capture when she returned, about an hour later. On looking in the corner, I was surprised to see that the frog was no longer there, but the trap was still in place, despite searching the room the frog was nowhere to be seen.

Now move on 18 months, I had need of a certain box, as I moved it some thing fell to the carpet, a well and truly dried up, leathery frog, - mystery solved, - well not quite, - how did it get out of the trap? Some mysteries are never solved.



Life at Strumpshaw

Brian Macfarland



I take great pleasure in announcing that the paint is now dry at Strumpshaw. All this year my pet phrase has been "watching paint dry" when I've been to Strumpshaw fen. At last I actually saw some bird life when I visited on 4th August. So different to last year in the same week, when I was watching three kingfishers all in view at the same time. In fact I had been seeing them every time I went plus all the other species. This year has been so quiet with little or no activity at all. I must say that has been the case all round the county compared to last year. I know every year is different, but only in what you see year on year, not what you don't see!

This last Tuesday I was thrilled to see two little egrets fly in together, I've ever only seen one at a time. One of them on landing started to preen immediately and kept it up for 2 hours 45 minutes. (I timed it) I was determined to stay 'till he finished, and at one time I thought I was going to be "outpreened". Surely that length of time must be some sort of record? Obviously it had cleaned all the feathers at one time rather than spread it out over the day. After the other one flew off after an hour, another two came into land in front of me, and one was seen flying in the distance well away from where the other one took off. So I can assume there were definitely five in the area, and maybe more. This is exciting news as I had only seen large numbers at Holkham.

I always thought that the egret looked quite big when flying, but I had the chance to gauge the difference when a heron flew in to land near to them, and walked past so I could compare sizes.(By the way the heron was another bonus as that was the first one I had seen anywhere near that close this year) Also I was able to compare them to a mute swan, and again the egret was dwarfed by it.

The other bird that kept flying by in numbers were cormorants who were fishing in the dyke in front of me, and taking off to fly round and come straight back. This went on the whole time I was there. Normally they fish in the river next to the fen.

I shall now be returning to Strumpshaw more often to enjoy what I have been missing all year. Thank goodness, I was beginning to worry the camera shutter might have seized up if it had gone much longer. Of course there are other things in life one can take pictures of. I didn't want to give the impression I was in any way paranoid!



INJURY FEIGNING

Hans Watson



The study of natural history has many rewards, and the more interested a person becomes then the more puzzles and questions a person encounters. For me, these puzzles have tended to intensify the interest to the point of becoming a passion. One of these puzzles concerns injury feigning, a type of behaviour seen in many species of birds. This practice is sometimes described in books as "broken-wing display" and falls within the broader heading of "Distraction Behaviour", where a bird attempts to divert attention away from a nest or young by any of a number of different actions, which may even include attacking the intruder.

Injury feigning is perhaps most well known in ground nesting birds such as waders, but has also been witnessed in species as diverse as doves, various warblers, buntings, wagtails, and waterfowl. The puzzle for me is why some individuals within a species give such convincing displays whilst others give a very half-hearted display, and some do not attempt any display at all.

Over the years I have watched Nightjars flush from quite a few nests, and most have flitted away brushing the herbage as though having difficulty flying. Others have flown off with their normal agile buoyant flight and have landed on top of a bush and scolded me. In July, however, I witnessed a very impressive display when a Nightjar left a nest containing chicks and flapped over heather for about 40 meters, almost convincing me it was injured. This display was then ruined when it rose vertically to land on a pine tree branch 2 meters from the ground. The bird then recommenced its injury feigning by thrashing its wings about, until I approached to within 10 meters. It then flew speedily away, the purpose of its display achieved.

Magpie behaviour

Roland Rogers

A neighbour of mine has a bird feeding set, which includes a tray for loose food, a cage for fat balls and a drinking tray. She has noticed that Magpies pick up items of food from the tray or the ground, a few at a time, drop them in the drinking water and then eat them one at a time. Recently, when a fat ball had become small enough, the Magpie extricated it from the cage, dropped it in the water and then ate it.

I have seen this behaviour for myself and wonder if it is normal Magpie behaviour. More than one Magpie visit the feeder so it is not possible to determine whether or not they all behave like this or if it is just one of them.



Goldfinches

Tony Howes



In the twenty five years Wendy and I have lived at this address, the number of times we have seen Goldfinches in the garden are very few indeed, and then only when they came down to the pond for a drink.

But this spring a pair decided to nest in the apple tree just outside the lounge window, a mere 15ft away. Thinking they might respond to a niger seed feeder, I put one on top of the bird table, and within a few days both adults were happily feeding from it. I thought this just might be the start of regular visits, and that, when fledged, the youngsters might also come down to feed, but it wasn't to be, they all departed, and as I write this it's two weeks since we last saw them.

But it was very enjoyable having them so close and on view daily for the four weeks or so that they were here, we miss the tinkling song and the superb colours of their plumage. We could not find any difference of markings between them, despite studying them at close quarters, but one seemed slightly smaller than the other. A very happy period, these beautiful birds gave us a lot of pleasure.

Trapping Long-eared Bats

Mike Ottley



On two occasions this year I have accidentally trapped a Long-eared Bat in my Skinner moth trap.

On the first occasion (19th June) the bat was simply released and flew strongly towards the adjacent pinewood.

The second occasion (23rd August) was more interesting as there was a total of thirty-four hind wings of Large Yellow Underwing moths in the bottom of the trap.

This Bat had, therefore, eaten seventeen large moths, which it must have caught by crawling around inside the trap, there being insufficient room to fly. There were many other species in the trap but only LYU's were taken.



A WHALE OF A TIME ON TERRINGTON MARSH

Robin Stevenson



On Saturday 13th September the Norfolk Flora Group held a meeting on Terrington Marshes, on the southern shores of the Wash. The Flora was fairly unexceptional, the main highlight being the presence of a lot of Sea Barley (*Hordeum marinum*). Also notable was the presence of large numbers of Small Tortoiseshell butterflies (*Aglais urticae*), feeding on Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*).

A much more unexpected find, by Oliver Folkard, was that of a large, slightly damaged vertebral epiphysis; its sheer size, with a diameter of 260 cm, immediately confirmed it as belonging to a cetacean of some sort. Whilst people gathered round to admire the find, a second - and this time undamaged - specimen was spotted nearby (see photos).

The epiphysis is a structure found at the end of a growing bone. It is separated from the main bone by cartilaginous tissue. In the case of the backbone the epiphyses at the end of adjacent vertebrae are separated by an inter-vertebral disc - the thing which 'slips'. In this case the size of the epiphyses indicates that the animal was more-or-less fully grown, and Dr Tony Irwin, of the Castle Museum in Norwich is of the opinion (based on their size) that they probably belonged to a Sperm Whale (*Physeter catodon*). Presumably, as the skeleton disarticulated, these flat Frisbee-like structures detached themselves from the main body of the bone. To find two epiphyses so close together suggests a nearby origin. (The specimens have been donated to the Castle Museum).

King's Lynn, which lies some 7km to the south-east, was, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a whaling port. One of the town's architectural treasures is an old public house still called the Greenland Fishery. However, it is unlikely that actual bones would have been transported back to base from the North Atlantic - they would have had no commercial value, and taken up too much room. It is, therefore, inherently unlikely that they date back to this period. More probably they have a comparatively recent origin, whale strandings being not uncommon on the Norfolk Coast, and in fact a whale was recorded as having beached in the area in 2004. It was subsequently towed out to sea, but then washed ashore again at Thornham. This may be the source of our material.

The hydrodynamics of disc shaped 'particles' are complex, but it seems clear that the two epiphyses would have been easier to lift and transport by wave action than an entire vertebra. Like a Frisbee they may have been able to skim over the rough vegetated surface of the salt marsh during a storm episode. They probably came from the two ends of a vertebra which may yet be lurking somewhere nearby, unobserved by passing botanists.



NATS' GALLERY: November 2008



GALLS OF THE GALL-WASP *ANDRICUS GROSSULARIAE*

on oak, Sheringham Common,
20 September 2008. Look out for this
recent colonist of Norfolk. See article.

Photo: Francis Farrow.



BROWN LONG-EARED BAT

accidentally trapped in a Skinner
moth trap. See article. *Photo: Mike
Ottley.*



NIGHTJAR

July 2008. Above:
a classic portrait
of this beautifully
but cryptically
marked bird.
Right: feigning
injury on a
branch 2 m
above ground.
See article.
*Photos: Hans
Watson.*





WHOSE DINNER? The remains of a Signal Crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus* by the River Bure. See article.
Photo: Hatty Aldridge.



WHALE EPIPHYSES, probably from a Sperm Whale, Terrington Marsh 13 September 2008. See article. Photos: Robin Stevenson.







**CORMORANT,
OSPREY,
LITTLE EGRETS** with
MUTE SWAN (left) and
GREY HERON (below)
and that lucky shot of
**KINGFISHER &
JUMPING FISH!**
Strumpshaw 2008.
See articles.
Photos: Brian Macfarlane.



GARDEN TIGER ab.

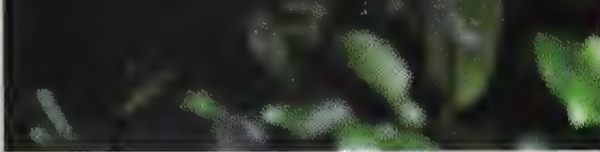
fumosa Hickling Broad. Up to 300 Garden Tigers were caught at this site in one night in 2008, but this was the only example found of this rather dusky aberration. See article. *Photo: Tim Peet.*



PHEASANT'S EYE in a Norfolk field. This arable weed was once widespread but is now almost extinct in the wild in Britain; most records, as in this case, probably originated from a 'Game Cover' or 'Conservation' seed mix. See article. *Photo: John Crouch.*



GOLDFINCHES (left, with Wood Pigeon for size comparison!). A charming addition to a Norfolk garden. See article.
Photos: Tony Howes.



PEZIZA REPANDA A number of fungi, mostly small, occur only or predominantly on old bonfire sites. The cup fungus *Peziza repanda* is not normally considered to be one of these carbonicolous fungi but here it is growing on discarded charcoal briquettes!
Photo: Tony Leech





AN ENDEMIC BRITISH ORCHID

You will find **Pugsley's Marsh Orchid**

Dactylorhiza traunsteinerioides in the field guides under the name 'Narrow-leaved Marsh Orchid *D. traunsteineri*'. Recent molecular studies have shown, however, that this form is a distinct species, endemic to Britain and Ireland, and it has therefore taken on a new name. It is of particular interest to Norfolk botanists for the county holds a few good populations of the species, which is more-or-less confined to Norfolk, North Wales, Anglesey, Yorkshire and western Scotland, as well as Ireland. In Scotland many the populations have more boldly marked flowers and spotted leaves, and these were once separated as 'Lapland Marsh Orchid *D. lapponica*' (bottom right).

Photos: Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk.



Excursion

Reports

● 2008-09 Field
Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



Wild Flowers Revealed no 18: Wickhampton Marshes

Sunday 29th June 2008

Leader: *Dr. Bob Leaney*

It was fortunate that there was not a service at Wickhampton church on the day of our meeting as the cars of the twenty people who turned up left no room for any potential congregation. Discussions took place as to what the weather was going to do as the earlier sunny sky had turned to dark clouds. It was heartening to see so many people taking the opportunity to learn more about our Norfolk flora, especially as we had the welcome company of our president, Mark Cocker.

We set off along a track leading on to the marshes, looking at the willows on the way. Bob Leaney pointed out the differences between two similar species: Crack Willow, *Salix fragilis* and White Willow, *Salix alba*. Bob identified another willow growing nearby as Sharp-stipuled Willow, *Salix mollissima*. This is the hybrid of Almond Willow, *Salix triandra*, and Osier, *Salix viminalis*. Widespread in Southern England, this willow is a relic of cultivation when it was valued by basket makers. The other willow noted was Grey Willow, *Salix cinerea*. While we were looking at the willows a Whitethroat was calling on one side and a Blackcap on the other. It wasn't long before we came to the first of the several dykes which were to spend quite a bit of the day looking in. The first of the sedges to be found was Greater Pond Sedge, *Carex riparia*. Just two other sedges were seen: False Fox Sedge, *Carex otrubae* and Cyperus Sedge, *Carex pseudocyperus*.

While we were looking at some duckweeds several of the specimens appeared thicker than others, these turned out to be Fat Duckweed, *Lemna gibba*, found mainly in the peat fens either end of Norfolk. The dykes also contained a lot of Ivy-Leaved Duckweed, *Lemna trisulca*. A water crowfoot was removed from the water for closer inspection and was confirmed to be Fan-leaved Water Crowfoot, *Ranunculus circinatus*. The abundance of two similar species, Fools watercress, *Apium nodiflorum*, and Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta*, gave us an opportunity to compare the differences between the two.

While most eyes were looking at the water plants, others were looking around. Mark spotted a Hobby eating a dragonfly while it was flying past. Nearby, a Sparrowhawk was being mobbed by a pair of Lapwings and a Kestrel also flew



over. Despite the depredations of the Hobby there were several dragonflies about considering the cool, cloudy conditions. Mark pointed out a Norfolk Hawker, *Aeshna isosceles*, and a Four-spotted Chaser, *Libellula quadrimaculata*. Also seen was a Brown Hawker, *Aeshna grandis*, and a male Emperor, *Anax imperator*. Several damselflies were also about, including: Azure, *Coenagrion puella*, Blue-tailed, *Ischnura elegans*, Common Blue, *Enallagma cyathigerum*, and Variable, *Coenagrion pulchellum*. I am grateful to others for help in identifying the insects we saw, especially Robert Maidstone, whose knowledgeable and interesting company is always welcome. Robert found a Longhorn Beetle, *Agapanthea villosviridescens* which commonly breeds in the stems of thistles; a jumping larvae, *Cantanaria rumicis*, and a Mullein moth *Cucullia verbasci*. A patch of nettles contained numbers of Peacock (*Inachis io*) caterpillars. The only other butterfly seen was a Meadow Brown, *Maniola jurtina*.

These 'Wild Flowers Revealed' meetings are aimed mainly at plants, but a group of naturalists can't help but take notice of other wildlife, and the more people in a group the more specialist skills they bring and share with us.

Several grasses were identified along the tracks, including: Crested Dog's-tail, *Cynosurus cristatus*, Meadow Barley, *Hordeum secalinum*, Smaller Cat's-tail, *Phleum bertolonii*, Timothy, *Phleum pratense* sens. Lat. Yellow Oat-grass, *Trisetum flavescens*. The grasses in the wetter areas included: Marsh foxtail, *Alopecurus geniculatus*, Floating Sweet-grass, *Glyceria fluitans*, Reed Sweet-grass, *Glyceria maxima* and Reed Canary-grass, *Phalaris arundinacea*. Most of the dykes we were looking in contained quantities of Water soldier, *Stratiotes aloides*, and Frogbit, *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*. Although only one flower of the frogbit was seen.

A suitable spot for lunch was found, and all present were happy to sit down, eat and reflect on what we had seen so far. While we were sitting there a Cuckoo was calling from quite far off, and despite the scant cover, a Cetti's Warbler gave a burst of song from its usual concealed location.

Setting off after lunch, a sizable patch of New Zealand Pigmyweed, *Crassula helmsii*, was spotted in a dyke. A note was made of the location so that the Broads Authority could deal with this unwelcome, invasive alien. Several plants of Tubular Water-dropwort, *Oenanthe fistulosa*, were growing in the margins. It is supposed to have a vine-like smell and the generic name *Oenanthe*, is derived from two Greek words meaning 'wine' and 'flower'. A large patch of Marsh Mallow, *Althaea officinalis*, was found on the bank of a dyke. In Britain, Marsh Mallow is declining, and is now a nationally scarce species.

While most of the plants in the dykes were visible, it was decided to try a bit of 'dyke-dipping' to see what might be growing submerged, so various implements were employed to 'drag' the dykes. Several small pondweeds came to light in this way, and with the help of Bob Ellis and Bob Leaney the following were identified: Small Pondweed, *Potamogeton berchtoldii*, Flat-stalked Pondweed, *P. friesii*,



Broad-leaved Pondweed, *P. natans* and Fennel Pond-weed, *P. pectinatus*. From the same haul, there emerged Spiked Water-milfoil, *Myriophyllum spicatum*, Common Spike-rush, *Eleocharis palustris* and Water Horsetail, *Equisetum fluviatile*.

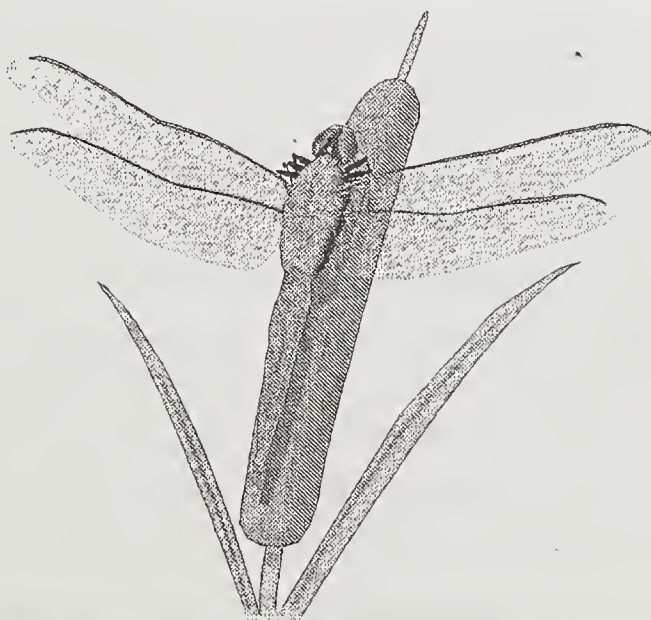
A stout-looking rush was seen on the far side of a dyke, so a short detour was made to try and get a sample. A specimen was procured and identified as Sea Club-rush, *Boloschoenus maritimus*. At the same spot there was a single plant of Saltmarsh Rush, *Juncus gerardii*. A more abundant rush was scattered along several of the dykes. This was Blunt-flowered Rush, *J. subnodulosus*.

At this point in the afternoon, one or two people wondered when we were going to turn back as we had walked quite a long way from the cars, the sky was 'threatening' and a few drops of rain had been felt. A decision was made and the group set off back. Just as we moved away, a Reed Bunting called from a dead tree and a Reed Warbler gave his monotonous warbling from a nearby reedbed. Our presence probably started the Reed Warbler calling as it has been noted that a moderate disturbance will start Reed and Sedge Warblers singing.

As we walked back to the cars, eyes were still on the ground and a few more species were added to the list, including: Wild Celery, *Apium graveolens*, Fig-leaved Goosefoot *Chenopodium ficifolium*, Scented Mayweed, *Matricaria recutita*, Hairy Buttercup, *Ranunculus sardous*, Brookweed, *Samolus valerandi* and Bastard Cabbage, *Rapistrum rugosum*.

I would like to thank Bob Ellis for keeping a list of the plants on the day, and also for his expert help in identifying the species we found. Bob Leaney did his usual sterling work in selecting another interesting location and as usual was free with his knowledge and enthusiasm. These 'Wild Flowers Revealed' meetings continue to be popular and give us the chance to visit interesting locations in Norfolk in the company of experts, botanical and otherwise. So look out for future meetings and come along to see more 'Wild Flower Revelations'.

Bill Mitchell.



Wild Flowers Revealed no 19: Stiffkey and Cockthorpe Common

Sunday July 20th 2008

Leader: *Bob Ellis*

A morning on the salt marshes at Stiffkey and an afternoon at Cockthorpe Common gave opportunities for finding a great variety of plant life. A goodly number of botanists, both expert and improving gathered at Stiffkey hoping that the promised heavy showers would not arrive when we were at the furthest point from shelter, as there were muddy dykes to negotiate.

Moving with the usual speed of botanists on a day out we made our way towards the sea, noting the difference between the Shrubby Seablite (*Suaeda vera*) and the annual (*Suaeda maritima*) both very common in the saltmarshes of Norfolk, but not nationally so. Indeed this applies to much of the vegetation, saltmarshes being a threatened habitat.

Common Sea Lavender (*Limonium vulgare*), such a lovely sight at this time of the year, was flowering well and Sea Purslane (*Atriplex portulacoides*) was lining the dykes some of which needed great care in crossing. We compared Sea Arrow-grass (*Triglochin maritima*) with the (at first sight) similar Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), and Bob gave us a concise guide to the different species of rush as we examined Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*).

When we reached the sea wall, we were pleased to be shown Long-Bracted Sedge (*Carex extensa*), a speciality of the north-west Norfolk coast, and on the drier ground Rock Sea Lavender (*Limonium binervosum* ssp *anglicum*), Sea Beet (*Beta vulgaris*, ssp *maritima*), Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*) and Sea Mayweed (*Triplospermum maritimum*).

By now we were in danger of thinking that all plant names begin with Sea or end *maritima* so we returned rather more rapidly to the car park for lunch.

After lunch we drove along the coast road and parked (prettily) across from the footpath that leads up to Cockthorpe Common, where a completely different flora awaited us on the chalky bank after a walk through woodland and across a stream. Chalk grassland is scarce in Norfolk, so it was good to find such a wonderful variety of chalk-loving plants. The Pyramidal Orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) were still in flower though the Common Spotted (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) were over and in seed. There was Quaking grass (*Briza media*), Eyebright (*Euphrasia nemorosa*), Dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*) and Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*), Common Rock rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) and Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) all worthy of note and careful study, while taking care not to kneel upon the Stemless thistle (*Cirsium acaule*).

Thanks to Bob Ellis for planning and leading a most successful day.

Hatty Aldridge



Survey Spotlight

A Christmas presence worth investigating

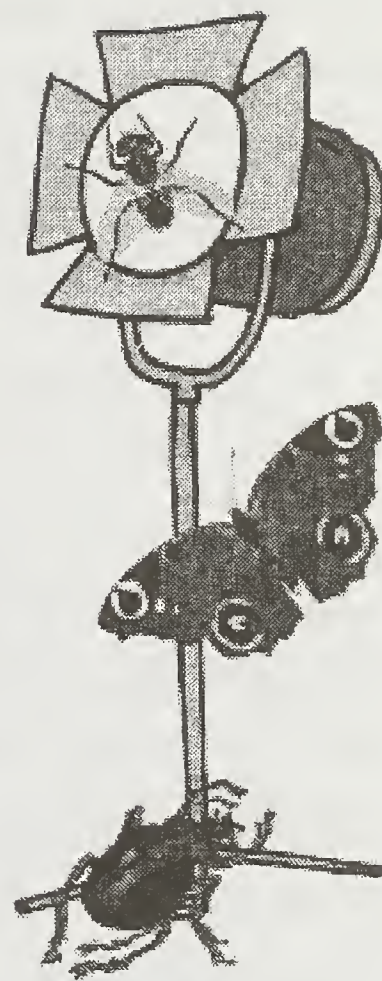
Ask almost anyone, birder or not, to name a migrant bird and the chances are that they'd plump for Swallow, House Martin or perhaps Cuckoo, which visit us to breed. Very few would mention one of the many species of duck, goose or wader that are have by now gathered on the large expanses of mudflat provided by these shores during our relatively warm winters, the latter a result of Britain's proximity to the Gulf Stream. The lower profile of our winter visitors is somewhat ironic as it is these, in addition to our breeding seabirds, that are of greatest conservation significance on a global scale, the numbers gathering in the UK representing a significant proportion of the world's populations.

As these populations are of international importance, it is vital that changes in numbers are monitored carefully each year, which is where the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) comes in. The survey, a partnership between BTO, RSPB, WWT and the JNCC, started in 1947 and 3,000 volunteers currently take part in synchronised monthly counts carried out at both coastal and inland sites across the UK. The majority take place across the winter period, but some also allow monitoring of those birds that remain in the country during the summer months. In addition to wildfowl (ducks, geese and swans) and waders, WeBS also covers gulls, terns, grebes, divers, herons, cormorants, rails and Kingfisher.

The data collected are used annually to produce population trends, and the most up-to-date results can be found on the BTO website at:

www.bto.org/webs/alerts/.

The first option in the menu at the left hand side of the page allows you to view the national trends for each species monitored. A quick browse can show you just how rapidly Little Egret has increased in abundance while demonstrating the continued decline in the numbers of wintering European White-fronted Goose. Selecting the second option will enable you to study the changes in abundance of species at individual sites. Did you know about the rapid increase in the numbers of wintering Wigeon at Breydon Water in the last 15 years, for example? How about the significant declines of Oystercatcher in The Wash over the same period? To identify the winners and losers over recent decades, just spend a few minutes on this website.



WeBS is dependent on the enthusiasm and dedication of the several thousand volunteer counters throughout the UK who participate. New counters are always needed to cover new sites, particularly around The Wash and at inland gravel pits in the west of Norfolk. Counts take just a few hours and are made once a month, winter being the key period. They require no special skills other than the ability to identify waterbirds, and advice and training can be provided to counters whose sites support large numbers of birds. So, if you fancy doing some birding as winter draws on, why not make it count for conservation by contacting the WeBS Unit at webs@bto.org or phoning them on 01842 750050.

Dave Leech

Norfolk's Badgers

John Couch

Recently one was asked to take over the role of Norfolk Badger Recorder, which was left vacant with the passing of Mr Tony Vine.

My involvement with badgers dates back to 1955 when one was eight years old and have studied this mammal ever since;

There are several badger species occurring throughout the world, but only one species occurs in the UK: - the Eurasian Badger (*Meles meles*).

This mammal does occur in Norfolk, though the density is very low compared to many other counties of the UK. In favourable areas of the UK there can be over 50 setts per 10 km². In Norfolk this is currently around 12, not all of which are permanently occupied.

This low density is influenced by several factors, eg; Norfolk is basically an agricultural county with large areas set to crops, other enterprises such as game shooting can cause disturbance to the land and consequently badgers,

Due to the low density Norfolk's badgers have evolved in a somewhat different manner to those in higher density areas, for example, territorial disputes appear to be almost non-existent, and badgers from different setts will regularly use the same latrine areas.

Their diet is much more varied than for example badgers in the West of England where there are large numbers of dairy cattle and as a consequence vast areas of undisturbed grassland. In these areas earthworms (commonly *Lumbricus terrestris*) are believed to make up 75% of a badgers diet, however, post-mortem's conducted on badgers killed on the roads of Norfolk have revealed that there is not more than a 22% dependency on earthworms.

There is never a shortage of food for badgers in Norfolk, who appear to have



developed quite catholic tastes.

As a result of the continued abundance of food there is no obvious period of semi-dormancy occurring in the Norfolk badger population, and they appear to carry on as normal throughout the winter months.

The badgers in Norfolk are under increasing pressure from the encroachment of human activities, e.g. the county population is continually expanding, necessitating the building of more housing and roads, and as a result, fatal badger RTA's have increased dramatically over the last ten years.

All details of badger road fatalities are of interest and are recorded, details of fatal badger RTA's can be forwarded to me via the E-mail address;
norfolkbadgers@yahoo.co.uk

On the 1st July 2000 the writer embarked upon the 'Ten Year Norfolk Badger Study', a non-scientific, part-anecdotal Interim Report relating to the study was published in January 2006.

This and much more information on the Norfolk badger population can be found on the 'NorfolkBadgers' site at;
www.groups.yahoo.com/group/norfolkbadgers.

Norfolk and Suffolk Bryological Group Meetings 2008/9.

Beginners are always very welcome, the only equipment needed is a handlens (x10 or x20) and some paper packets for collecting specimens. Meetings begin at 10.30am. (except for the 15th November and 25th January) and will only be cancelled if there is snow or hard frost.

Saturday 15th November 2008, 11am. Introduction to Mosses. NNNS meeting at Holt Lowes, led by Mary Ghullam. Meet at the N end of the Lowes off Hempstead Road at TG 088 382.

Sunday 30th November 2008. Mattishall Moor SSSI, by permission of Mr. J. Gogle. Calcareous valley fen, marshy grassland and wet woodland/scrub. Parking very limited. Grass track to Moor leaves Yaxham - Mattishall road at TG 027 114. 4x4's can park here but cars use firmer track just to the W at TG 027 113 almost opp Boundary House, by permission of Mr. C. Harrison.

Saturday 13th December 2008. 'The Wilderness', County Wildlife Site, Horsham St. Faiths, by permission of Forest Enterprise and Dr & Mrs Pollock. Woodland, scrub, pingos, spoil dump. Turn W from A140 almost opp sign to Newton St. Faith/Crematorium, follow concrete road 1/2m and park behind Park Farm buildings at end of concrete at TG 209 167.



Sunday 4th January 2009. Leziate closed RSPB Reserve with permission for today's visit. Woodland, dry heath, lichen heath, two large pools. Park at the Country Park, TF 675 198. Paul Eele, the RSPB Warden, will meet us there. Walk approx 1/2km to the Reserve.

Saturday 17th January 2009. Whitwell Common SSSI. By Permission of the Whitwell Trustees. Wet woodland, fen, unimproved grassland, old peat-cutting hollows. Follow-on from short visit in Jan 2005. The 2007 meeting was cancelled because of snow. Park in small pull-in by phone box at TG 084 204, perhaps 4x4's on verge opp.

Sunday 25th January 2009, 11am. Lichen meeting at Felbrigg, see NNNS programme.

Sunday 1st February 2009. Great Grove SSSI, Euston Estate, by permission of Lord Euston. Ancient Hornbeam-Oak-Ash-Maple woodland on boulder clay. Park on set-aside just NE of wood, access at TL 932 764, if too wet for cars - limited, firmer ground just SW on corner of track to Heath Cottages. Please do not block either of the Heath Cottages access tracks. Best access to wood via track at TL 929 762.

Sunday 15th February 2009. Lamb's Common and The Narboroughs, West Acre Estate, by permission of Mr.H.Birkbeck. Un-managed, woodland, wet in places. Follow-on visit from last winter. Park on verges where track meets road at TF 729 167. Follow track and Permissive Path signs into wood.

Sunday 1st March 2009. Barningham Hall, Matlaske by permission of Mr. T. Courtauld. Woodland & perhaps other parts of the grounds eg. walled garden. Park off the drive, just over second cattle grid at TG 147 352. Iron gate at corner of garden wall leads along wall and fence to a stile into the wood.

Saturday 14th March 2009. Lexham Estate by permission of Mr. N. Foster. Walls and buildings imm adj to Estate Office (but not the Hall itself), parkland and river banks N & E of Hall, mixed woodland S of Hall, un-improved woodland around TF 873 166. Enter by main drive, continue ahead past L branch to Hall, then L to limited parking by Estate Office at TF 865 171. Please do not park on any grass.

Sunday 29th March 2009. Holly Farm Meadow SSSI, Wendling by permission of Mr. S. Bush. Survey requested by Natural England. Calcareous fen grassland with wet & dry areas, some Hawthorn scrub. Perhaps also Wendling and Longham churches? Take track on E of Longham road just N of A47 SP Holly House and park on "green" at TF 935 131. Access to Meadow by iron gate in SW corner of the green, then L through second gate.



British Bryological Society Recorders:

Robin Stevenson, 111 Wootton Road, King's Lynn, PE30 4DJ.

Tel: 01533 766 788.

Mary Ghullam, 5 Beech Drive, North Walsham, Norfolk, NR28 OBZ.

Tel: 01692 402 013

Richard Fiske, 35 Fair Close, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 9QR.

Tel: 01502 714 968.

Programme:

Pat Negal, 'Inishmore', Greenways, Newton Flotman, Norfolk, NR15 1QJ

Tel: 01508 471 070

25 Years Ago from the *NNS* Transactions

(from Vol. 26 Part 3, May 1983 - page 183)

THE FROGHOPPER *PHILAENUS SPUMARIUS* L., (HOMOPTERA, CERCOPIDAE)

by K. C. DURRANT

Often called the Spittle fly or White-eyed froghopper, it is by far the most common widespread of the many species of Cercopidae Homoptera. It is most conspicuous in the spring and early summer when the patches of froth appear on a wide variety of plants. This is caused by the nymph who after sucking the sap exudes a fluid from the anus and by forcing air into it produces the familiar froth or cuckoo-spit with which it surrounds itself for protection from desiccation and to some extent from its enemies. Adults are all vaguely frog-like and jump when disturbed, hence the name froghopper.

Eggs are laid in autumn either singly or in small batches of up to 30, hatching in May of the following year. The nymphs remain feeding in the spume for 4 to 5 weeks before becoming adult in early July, they can be found up until late October.

Adults are very variable in wing colour pattern markings which are basically brown with darker markings. There are a number of distinctly marked named colour forms which fall into 2 groups i.e. pale coloured heads and dark coloured heads. Interbreeding occurs between all forms and intermediates frequently occur.

The solitary wasp *Argogorytes mystaceus* (L.) stores its larval cells with the nymphs which it drags from their surrounding spume. The dipteran *Verralia aucta* (Fall.) has frequently been recorded parasitising adult females and has also been from them. Large numbers of nymphs are taken by game chicks, whose heads are often found covered in froth.

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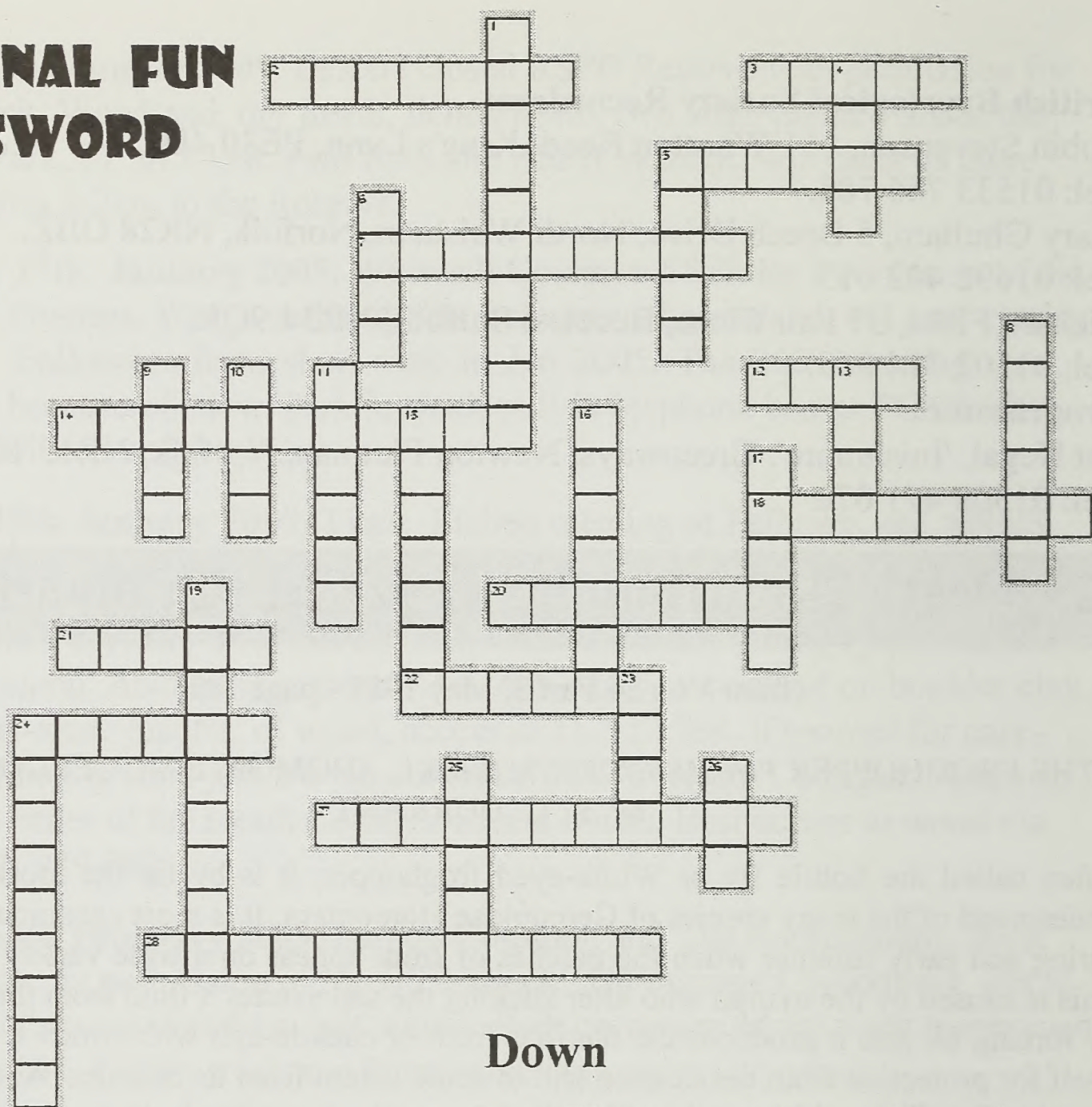
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SEASONAL FUN CROSSWORD

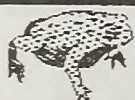


Across

2. What order of insects does a house-fly belong?
3. What is the fossilised resin of conifers called?
5. What do glow-worms feed on?
7. What does a sagittate leaf look like?
12. What is a ruby tiger?
14. What is the term for creatures of the twilight?
18. What is the main food of the speckled wood butterfly?
20. What term is used to describe a plant of waste places?
21. The collective noun for a group of foxes?
22. A convocation of
24. What birds can be grey, purple or night?
27. What is the collective noun for a flock of starlings?
28. Name Britain's first national park (4,8)?

Down

1. What insect produces cuckoo-spit?
4. What is an adult male seal called?
5. A porbeagle is a kind of
6. Collective name for beech nuts
8. Small poison spined fish found on North Norfolk coast
9. A typical water body of breckland
10. Name of male rabbit
11. What gives the colour to lepidopteron wings?
13. An upland pool or small lake
15. What is the UK name for alfalfa?
16. What tree has pink fruits?
17. In what rock are flints found?
19. Which British Fritillary butterfly is only found in the Isle of Wight?
23. What do badgers live in?
24. What do you call a salt-tolerant plant?
25. What is a young salmon called?
26. The wood traditionally used for rulers





The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be February 2009. Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by **January 7th 2009** to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR26 8QD Email: francis.f@virgin.net

Please send all photographic material to:
Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield,
Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR22 2RP Email: harrap@onetel.net

Membership subscriptions

The N&NNS membership year runs from 1st April to 31st March. During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly *Natterjack* newsletter, and annual copies of the Transactions of the Society, and the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report.

Membership renewals are due on *1st April each year* and should be sent to the treasurer:

- David Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

New memberships should be sent to:

- David Paull, 8 Lindford Drive, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6LT.

Current rates are £12 for individual and family memberships (£15 for groups, £18.50 overseas).

Cheques payable to: Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.

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